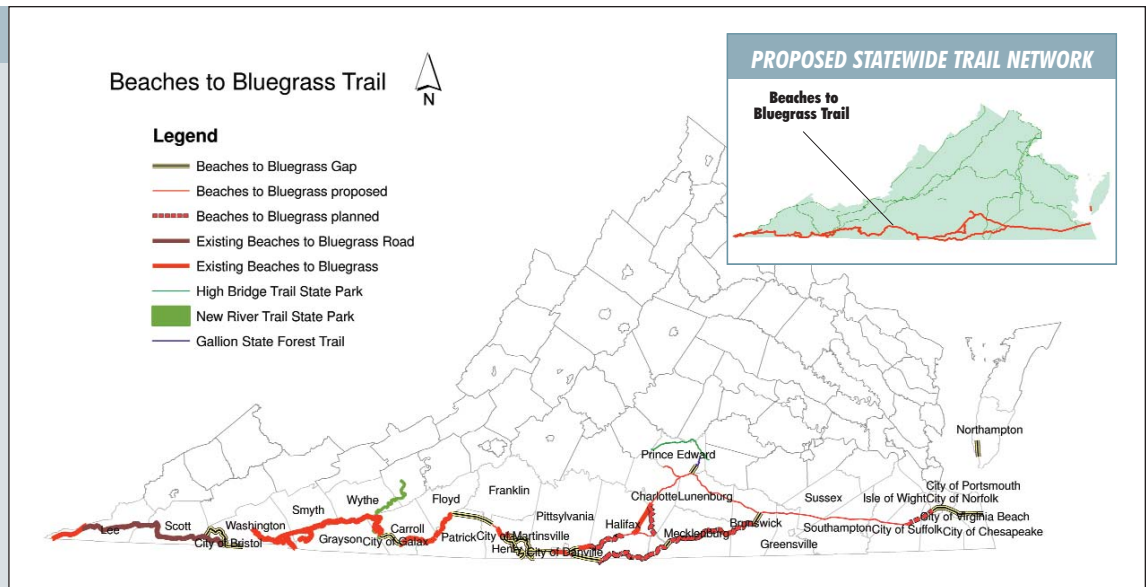


The Proposed Trail System

The concept is a trail that traverses southern Virginia from its western borders to the coast. For the concept to become reality, trail groups from across the state, many already active in developing local trails, need to come together as a coordinating body.

Linking resources could lead to a diversified trail providing spectacular scenery in the mountains of southwestern Virginia, views down the New River Valley, vistas of the eastern Piedmont from the crest of the Blue Ridge, and encounters with small streams, old forests, and mountain meadows as it moves east into the industrial centers of Martinsville, Danville, and South Boston. The abandoned railroads that make up the Tobacco Heritage Trail traverse productive agricultural regions, from tobacco, corn and soy bean fields of the lower Piedmont to pine plantations, cotton, peanut, and pork producing areas of the coastal plain. The black water swamps, tidal marshes, and sandy beaches of the Tidewater region provide an entirely different visual experience on the eastern end of the trail.



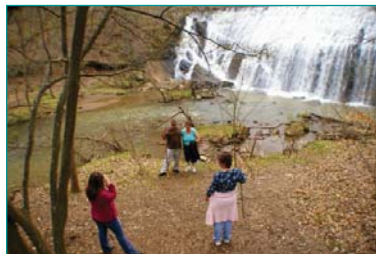
The trail is envisioned as a braided trail system made up of paralleling trails sharing a common direction without serving the same user group. Some trails will be multi-use and non-motorized. Others may include carriage riders or motorized trail users. Some sections will require bicycle riding on paved roads, while in other cases, the trail may be too narrow and steep to allow bicycles and only pedestrians will be allowed.

Conceptually the trail will have five segments. The western segment will stretch from Cumberland Gap to the crest of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The second from the eastern crest of the Blue Ridge to Danville. Next, the Tobacco Heritage Trail portion would run from Danville east to I-95. The next segment could stretch from I-95 to Suffolk. From Suffolk east the Tidewater section would link the existing bicycle and pedestrian

infrastructure with the ocean and the Bay. Within those five major segments many shorter segments supported by local governments, trail clubs, and other active advocates would accomplish the major work of designing, developing, operating, and maintaining the trails that together would create the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail.

BEACHES TO BLUEGRASS TRAIL

Explore the Possibilities



A trail along the Smith River in Henry County could become a segment of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail. Dan River Basin Association photo by Brian Williams.

GOALS

The first goal is to pull together existing trail groups and enthusiasts to form a group to coordinate efforts in developing what is tentatively being called the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail. This group will also give the trail a permanent name.

Their efforts could result in a braided trail that will connect the Cumberland Gap with the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Designated components of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail will be joined together to form a long-distance network across the southern length of Virginia. Since the trail will be comprised of many existing trail segments, not all trails will be multi-purpose, but in general the trail will attract a diverse mix of users.

BENEFITS

The trail will create a brand that can be marketed throughout the country. Few trails will be able to boast the wide range of historic, cultural, scenic, natural, recreational, entertainment, or artistic assets that will be encompassed within this trail corridor. The benefits to the providers of tourism services will be immense. The opportunity for new businesses and new jobs in the tourism and visitor services industries will be significant.

This trail will link together a wide variety of resources. It will help to meet transportation needs in every community along its route. It will attract visitors from out of the region who will contribute to the economic vitality of the region and will help link communities, build community spirit and improve the quality of life. It will encourage outdoor exercise and adventure, interpret the historical context of the corridor and promote care for and appreciation of natural resources.

AUTHORITY LEGISLATION

Legislation passed in 1972 authorized DCR to establish and administer a state-wide system of non-motorized, scenic, recreational and connecting side trails.
§ 10.1-204

PARTNERS

The trail is in the conceptual stage. Potential existing and proposed components have been mapped and clearly show where gaps exist. It is hoped that each locality and region will work toward filling those gaps with trails that meet their community needs while also helping to complete the connections needed for the project's success.

Trail advocacy groups already planning and managing trails along the corridor include the Southern Appalachian Greenways Alliance, Daniel Boone Wilderness Trail Association, Mendota Trail Association, Virginia Creeper Trail Club, the National Park Service and the Over Mountain Victory Trail Association, George Washington and Jefferson National Forest, Blue Ridge Parkway affiliated groups, Virginia State Parks and State Forests, U.S. Corps of Engineers, Henry County-Martinsburg Rivers and Trails Association, Dan River Basin Association, City of Danville, Richmond & Danville Trail Association, Roanoke River Rails to Trails, Inc., and the planning district commissions and local governments of Southern Virginia.

While it is still in the conceptual phase, this trail tentatively called "Beaches to Bluegrass" is one of five long distance trail networks that serve as the foundation in developing a statewide Virginia Trail Plan. Long range, Virginia's plan will strive for a commonwealth traversed by a system of multi-purpose trails linking Virginia's communities, open spaces and natural landscapes.

The book *Beach to Bluegrass: Places to Brake on Virginia's Longest Road*, was published in 2007 by Joe Tennis and describes the journey from First Landing/Cape Henry to Cumberland Gap, largely following the Highway 58 corridor.

Project Status – Accomplishments and Milestones

NAME	STATUS	EXISTING MILES
Northampton Trail	A trail linking Kiptopeke State Park to Cape Charles has been proposed and is in the planning stages of development	
Tidewater Trails	Some sections existing, some new connectors being studied	
Old Virginian Railroad (pipeline)	Bridges need decking-managing entity	
Tobacco Heritage Trail	Corridor acquisition underway, management plan in final draft form, and 100 miles under development	4
Staunton River Trail	Route identified and pending approval from USACOE	
Dan River Trail	Proposed from South Boston to Staunton River	
Danville Riverwalk	Existing	6
Ringold to Pittsylvania Line	Existing	6
Martinsville to Danville Connector	Route needs to be identified, approximately 30 miles	
Smith River Trail	Under development by the Dan River Basin Association and Henry County	7
Patrick Springs to Fieldale Trail	Possible connector trail	
Mayo River Rail Trail	Connection to Eden, NC	
Smart View to Fairystone/Philpott Connector	Route needs to be identified	
Blue Ridge Parkway Trails	Existing. Some off-road segments needed	55
New River Trail State Park	Existing (total 57 miles)	16
Virginia Highlands Trail	Existing	63
Iron Mountain Trail	Existing	
Virginia Creeper Trail	Existing	12
Overmountain Victory Trail	Trail is designated but needs to be acquired and constructed	1
Mendota Trail	No development at this time (22 miles of abandoned railroad corridor)	
North Holston Greenway	Route needs to be identified in partnership with Southern Appalachian Greenways Alliance	
Daniel Boone Trail Trail	Existing on road. Off-road segments needed	70
Wilderness Road Trail	Existing	10
STAFFING AND SUPPORT		PROJECT WILL BE A COALITION OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM EXISTING COMPONENT S
Regional Accomplishments	Tobacco Heritage Trail--River Rails to Trails has developed a master plan and a management plan, acquired over 100 miles of corridor, and built 4 miles of trail	
Kiosk Locations	None	
Longest completed segment	Although there are numerous existing trails, no formal designation has taken place	
On-road section most in need of improvement	Daniel Boone Trail	
Model Section	Pending formal designation	

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